SOME THOUGHTS UPON THE GROUNDS OF MAN'S EXPECTATION OF A *FUTURE STATE*, FROM THE PRINCIPLES *of* REASON.

DRAWN UP

For the uſe of a *Gentleman* who doubted whether there really was *any* thing, we have either to *fear*, or to *hope* for beyond this preſent life.

An EPISTLE *from a Gentleman to his Friend.*

To which are added,

Two ſhort CHAPTERS concerning the Uſefulneſs or Advantage of a farther Revelation.

AND AN

INTRODUCTION,

SHEWING,

The apparent Influence which the belief of an Afterſtate has, upon the *human temper* and *actions*.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

SUCH is the Conſtitution of human nature in its preſent condition of Being, that the views men take of an *After-ſtate* have a moſt apparent influence on their temper and actions. Do they firmly believe *endleſs happineſs* to be inſeparably connected with a life of piety and virtue, they cannot but purſue *righteouſneſs* whilſt they act in character; *that is to ſay*, whilſt they form their behaviour by their judgments, or act upon received Principles. This is a truth plainly reſulting from the nature of things, foraſmuch, as *that man* muſt be ſelf-condemned, whoever he be, who can ſo far trifle with the convictions of his own mind as to pay little or no regard to them. Now, this is evidently the caſe of all ſuch who are in judgment perſuaded, that an *eternal*

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well-being depends upon present steady regards to *truth*, and yet dare violate her laws, and not only so, but take pleasure in such violations.

BUT there are a sort of people who have found out a way of obtaining *quiet* under their VICES and FOLLIES, notwithstanding they pretend to say, that they believe themselves designed for *endless being*; and that *Heaven*, or the State of blessedness which they hope for, will be a state of perfect purity and holiness. — To reconcile this horrid inconsistency, *they have found out many inventions*. *Some* have presum'd upon the principle of God's being *merciful*. This they have learn'd to be a truth from *Observation* and *Experience*. They discern his tender mercies to be over all his works: And they have observ'd him very indulgent in his providence towards the unjust and the unthankful. They have found his goodness express it self in acts of lenity and forbearance towards themselves; judgment has not been executed upon them for their evil deeds. And they not only reason thus in themselves, but they find the wisest and best men of the same opinion, *viz.* that God could not make any creature with a design to *damn* it; and hereupon they conclude falsly, that they shall be quite *safe* by committing themselves to *his mercy*, however wickedly they have passed off life. I say, this conclusion of theirs is a false one, and the effect of rashness: For, had they coolly consider'd, they would have discern'd, that altho' God never made

made any creature with a design that it should be damn'd, yet these powers and capacities of happiness which distinguish the *moral* from the *other parts* of the creation, are such, as may be so far abus'd as to be wholly perverted by the *creature* from the intention of the CREATOR; and so render *it*, that is, the creature, incapable of mercy.

BUT to remove all difficulty that might arise from a *personal indisposition* for happiness, there are *those* who have invented a *foreign qualification*; these have imagin'd that by an easy *transferring act* of the Almighty, the rectitude and purity of another, would, *in fact*, become their own personal meetness; and that they may plead it, and rely upon it as such. — It is not to be wonder'd at, that men of this turn of mind, have run into the most extravagant sentiments, and cherish'd the most unworthy Ideas of God — even so barbarous and profane as to suppose, that he could see *no manner of sin* or *vice* in them. That they might indulge to *drunkenness* or to *any debauchery*, to *injustice* or *any kind of oppression* or *cruelty*, God could only look upon them through the righteousness and purity of another, forasmuch as they belong'd to the *election of grace* — Surely, a greater indignity cou'd not be offer'd to this wise, equitable and holy Being, than to imagine that he has contriv'd a *medium* that shall thus deceive his own infinite understanding! And that he cannot now see things as they really are!

Besides, this invention effectually defeats the most divine address of mercy and goodness, by relaxing mens regards to personal righteousness and purity, placing in their stead a *presumptuous act of faith* in another for justification.

THIS enormous, frightful mask, having been artfully put upon the *doctrine of Christianity*, has prejudiced the minds of a great many who have unhappily taken up their opinions, and form'd their sentiments of the *Christian revelation* from the writings and teachings of these *Innovators*; without ever being at the pains of a careful and impartial examination into the writings of the *New Testament*. By this means, the doctrines of the benevolent and holy Jesus have become the subject of contempt and ridicule. Men thus prejudic'd can never propose to themselves any real pleasure or satisfaction in seeking after the *friendship* of a Being, who, they apprehend, dispenses his favours in so unequitable, weak, and unreasonable a way. They must not expect to be treated by him according to their personal meetness: No; they have only this one *chance* to depend upon, *viz.* that of having been *nominated* and *chosen* from eternity, through the merit of another. And if they should not have the good fortune to be among the *elect*, they stand no manner of chance of avoiding *eternal damnation*, let their conduct be ever so circumspect.

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ONE would be tempted to think, that a man of any common capacities (that has a ſenſe of right and wrong) could not well reliſh Chriſtianity, if he was once brought to imagine this to be the doctrine of it.--Sooner, ten thouſand times ſooner, would he ſit down and content himſelf with that ſatisfaction which he feels reſulting from a conſcience void of wilful and allowed offence againſt the plain dictates of the light of nature: And rather conclude, that if *Revelation* can give no better account of the *final iſſues* of being, he may rationally ſuppoſe, that there is no *wiſe* or *juſt ſovereign* at the head of things; but that the whole is in a ſtate of anarchy and confuſion! and of conſequence, he may ſecurely depend upon it, that his *own being* ſhall find a period in death. — Upon this principle, he will be chiefly ſolicitous to obtain all that *quantum* of pleaſure of which his appetites and ſenſations can render him capable. He will indeed, if he makes the beſt uſe of, what we call, his rational powers, adjuſt his gratifications to the ſtrength of the appetite or capacity; and not chuſe to ſtrain, weaken, or impair it by any exceſs. But, as to any of thoſe diſpoſitions, which we are apt to denominate *divine, religious virtues*, he will have no manner of concern about cultivating theſe, ſince he will deſire no acquaintance with ſuch a weak, capricious *Phantom* which men have firſt created, and then deified. The very thought of ſuch a *Sovereign* gives him the utmoſt diſguſt, and leads

leads him not only to a bare *wish* or *hope* that there is no such a God, but firmly to *believe* it.

If a man so unhappily prejudic'd against the Revelation of Jesus, having weakly taken its character from mistaken men, and not from the *writings* themselves, should happen to extend his survey more impartially, and range the accounts of *pagan* or *barbarous nations*, through the several ages of their Histories, he will find, by the universal consent of tradition, that they have generally supposed *something necessary to be offer'd* in order to appease their *Deities*; and that they have not contented themselves with offering their corn, their wine, or their oil; but they have sacrificed *sheep* and *oxen*. Nor have they rested here, but have proceeded to *human sacrifices*; making the very *fruit of their bodies* an atonement for the sin of their souls! hereby intimating plainly, that they thought their Deities were *angry* and *revengeful*; and that they were to be *pacified* and *pleased* with such services. Which apprehensions must arise from want of right conceptions of the Almighty, whose perfect blessedness can no way be disturb'd by the creature's transgression; no more, than it can be encreas'd by his obedience: They must arise from want of knowing, that *vice* and *immorality* extend no farther than the creature in their effects, rendering it unmeet for happiness, or a possession of the true end of being. So that he must see all such *commutations* to be vain and trifling; that they debase the

the dignity of the *Supreme Being*, vail his amiableness from the minds of the offerers, and cannot be attended, in such a light, with any useful effect.

THIS *Examiner* may perceive these *pagan originals* copied out with great improvements among a *Set of men*, who call themselves, The CATHOLICK CHURCH! and pretend to monopolize Christianity to themselves. — By their doctrine of *purgatory*, by their *absolutions*, *penances*, and *indulgencies*, he must be led to think, that if these men are in the right, or under an infallible guidance, their God must be an inconceivably *weak*, *sordid*, *indigent Being*; that can and does *ring changes* on the eternal laws, and settlements of things, at the pleasure of his *priests*, and whenever it is for the profit and honour of their CHURCH, which, they would have you think, is *for his own glory!* — This prospect must greatly strengthen the *Examiner*'s prejudice against the *Christian Religion*.

BUT *on the other hand*, could he but once discern that the whole design of the *Mediation of Christ*, was to heal, cure, and rectify the maladies and disorders of mankind; to open in a more full and clear manner the several branches of truth, that concern man's being, and the perfection of it: *More particularly*, that it was to give him the most unconteſtable evidence of God's being kind and propitious to the whole human

human family; that Christ's *death* and *resurrection* were so far from being the effects of *incensed wrath* or *justice*, that they were, in reality, the most compleat and finished evidences of *good will* to men ——

I SAY, could an *Infidel* discern this, as he plainly might, from the obvious concurring sense and harmony of all the *New Testament writings*, he would soon be enabled to think very consistently about a FUTURE STATE; the *opening of which*, seems to be the GREAT INTENTION of this divine Revelation. And, in truth, the unfolding and explaining the nature and circumstances of that world and state which lie beyond the grave, was every way worthy a divine Revelation; and an *errand* well becoming that divine Person, *The* SENT *of God, the Saviour of men.*

THE firm belief of an *after existence*, or a *state of retribution*, must have a considerable effect and influence upon human conduct. For,

LET us suppose a man firmly persuaded, that the narrow bounds of this present life would set limits to his being: He must have no manner of concern about his accountableness for his conduct, with which principle there stands inseparably connected an *imagination*, that there is no presiding intelligent mind or principle that gives laws to beings and

things; or, that is concern'd to ſecure the intereſt, order, or happineſs of the univerſe: But that a certain *unguided rotation* obtains by an inconceivable *fatality* or *chance*.

THIS *atheiſtical* notion of things is very likely to have a malignant influence on human conduct; for, if once a man admits that the world is not under Law to a ſupreme Governor, he will look upon himſelf as a mere machine, deſtin'd by a *blind fatality* to ſuch a courſe of conduct, and no way liable to a farther examination. Men under theſe prejudices will readily conclude, that as ſoon as *Death* has done its office, the whole *farce* is over, and that inward principle of reflection or conſciouſneſs, which they find a *little troubleſome* at preſent, will die alſo, not being of any farther uſe to the diſſolv'd piece of mechaniſm.

SUCH ſentiments have naturally a ſtrong tendency to debauch human conduct; ſince, upon the principles of *fatality*, that harmony and order which appears in the world, is but by *chance*: So that there is no ſolid ground for the creature's love and approbation of *regularity* and *order*.

NEVERTHELESS, as there appears in man a governing principle or motive by which he directs his actions, *viz.* that of *ſelf-love*, it is natural to ſuppoſe, that when he perceives ſuch actions ſtand connected with ſuch effects

upon himſelf as do afford an agreeable ſenſation or perception; and that ſuch contrary actions are neceſſarily attended with effects that are painful or diſagreeable: Though the man ſhould be ſo weak as to imagine this to be the eſtabliſhment of *undeſigning fate*, yet he may, by the *order* and *beauty* which he diſcerns in one ſort of conduct, and the *diſorder* and *deformity* that appears in the other, be ſo far influenc'd, as to act in that manner which is called *virtuouſly*: Even from this principle of *ſelf-love*; that is to ſay, he is moſt likely to prefer that ſort of temper and action which gives him pleaſure upon the reflection, to that which gives him pain.

THIS we might reaſonably expect would be the *choice* of man, endued with reaſon, intelligence and choice; but when we conſider him as ſurrounded with *material objects*, which make an immediate addreſs to his ſenſes and appetites, and do ſtrongly impreſs them; he may be ſuppoſed as eaſily diverted from carrying his thought and reflection to that pitch which is neceſſary to ſet things in a true light; [comparing their natures, and weighing their tendencies, being requiſite:] And therefore, in order to the greater ſecurity of man's *virtue* or *right choice*, ſome ſhorter way of determination will ſeem neceſſary. But there is none left, unleſs he call in the *aid* of a ſupreme Governor and Lord, to whom he can aſcribe the origin of this ſettlement, and to whom he can

can attribute a conſtant ſuperintendency and care.

WHEN man can thus conſider himſelf, as a *creature* of God, and as a ſubject of his Government; when he can diſcern that there is an amiableneſs and beauty in all his conſtitutions: that he is perfectly wiſe and good, as well as powerful or almighty, he muſt then be able with confidence to rely on him for *being* and *well-being*. He may do this, whilſt he knows himſelf to be under the direction of thoſe laws or ſettlements that take place in the moral world. So that by a ſingle glance at his *omniſcience*, the temptation to offend will be damp'd in its force: The affections of *love* and *fear* darting towards this ſupreme Lord, will inſpire with a ſeaſonable caution, and by this means keep off the infection.

AND what can be more natural, than that this *pious contemplation* ſhould fix an expectation in the human mind of being *better acquainted* with this infinite Spirit? The ſecurity of exiſting beyond the grave, and of being perfected in thoſe *amiable diſpoſitions* which ariſe from order and proportion in the moral world, which ſecurity is to be had under the diſplay of omnipotent power, infinite wiſdom, and goodneſs unchangeably wiſe and perfect; the whole correſponding with the moſt noble and exalted Ideas we can poſſibly form either of Being or of Govern-

ment, does fully prove the *expectation* to be highly rational.

THE various branches of *truth* respecting a *state of retribution*, are delineated in their several attitudes, with so much solid judgment and skill in these *sheets*, that one cannot forbear hoping that this performance will greatly contribute to the settling the minds of such, who are honest, and not afraid of *truth*. The worthy AUTHOR *of these Papers* has had the satisfaction, of their having done service whilst in *Manuscript*. And from a generous concern for the present inquisitive and *knowing*, but too unsettled age, he has order'd their publication — The manifest spread of insensibility or thoughtlesness with regard to the *weight* and *importance* of moral truths, is a dreadful reflection upon a people or nation so enlightened with the discoveries of their distinct natures, theories, or characters, as ours is. In order to assist in the remedying of this evil, and removing this deformity, they are now sent abroad into the world.

THE *Author* desired something might be added; I was therefore willing, as I had the papers by me, to add a short chapter or two upon the usefulness and advantage of a farther Revelation, which I have thought would harmonize with the design of his Papers. There was to have been subjoyned *two Essays* up-

upon the nature, or rather, the duration of FUTURE PUNISHMENTS. *One* upon the supposition of their being endless: the *other*, upon the supposition of their destroying the subject; wrote more immediately as an answer to a Book, entitled, *The World unmask'd*; and Mr. JER. WHITE's *Restoration of all Things*. But the publication of these must be deferr'd for the present. If hereafter it may be thought fit to publish them, they may stand as a proper Supplement to these Essays.

TO *conclude*; what is now offered as an INTRODUCTION, was occasion'd by a view of the importance of taking GOD into our thoughts, and of admitting his *Government* and *Rule* in the support of a virtuous character. For as my Lord *Shaftesbury* says of *Atheism* *, " It can be no great strengthening " to the moral affection, no great support to " the pure love of goodness and virtue, to " suppose that there is neither *goodness* nor " *beauty* in the WHOLE it self; nor any ex- " ample or president of good affection in any " superiour Being. Such a belief must rather " tend to the weakening of the affections from " any thing amiable or self-worthy, and to " the suppressing the very habit and familiar " custom of admiring natural Beauties, or " whatsoever in the order of things is accord- " ing to just design, harmony, and propor-

* His Characteristicks, *Vol.* II. p. 70.

" tion.

" tion. For how little dispos'd must a person
" be to love or admire any thing as *orderly* in
" the Universe, who thinks the universe it self
" a pattern of disorder? How unapt to re-
" verence or respect any particular subordi-
" nate beauty of a part; when even THE
" WHOLE it self is thought to want per-
" fection, and to be only a vast and infinite
" deformity?"

A

FUTURE STATE

To be expected on the

PRINCIPLES *of* REASON.

SIR,

" I AM ſorry that I have been ſo
" long hinder'd from giving you
" my thoughts concerning the
" grounds of our expectation of
" a *future ſtate* upon the prin-
" ciples of Reaſon. I ſhould have been very
" glad of ſome diſcourſe with the *Gentleman*
" you mention'd to me when I was at *London*,
" who expreſſed to you his doubts, whether
" there really was *any* thing, we have either
" to fear, or to hope for beyond this preſent
" life; but was ſo ingenuous as to acknow-
" ledge, that if he could be convinc'd of this,

" he

" he ſhould not allow himſelf of ſome *liber-*
" *ties*, which he did not think it imprudent to
" indulge under his preſent apprehenſion.

" SINCE I was prevented the pleaſure of his
" converſation, I have, in compliance with
" your requeſt, drawn up the following ſheets,
" which you may communicate to him: For
" you may remember that you was of opinion,
" as well as my ſelf, that altho' *Diſcourſe* gives
" the advantage of ſpeedier replies to arguments,
" yet it is not always the ſureſt way of ſetting
" things in the plaineſt light."

THE method in which I ſhall proceed, is as follows.

I Do not think that the mere light of reaſon is ſo clear as to ſhut out all doubt; but as I take it, there are ſo many ſtrong probabilities, as do, in all other caſes, incline men to act agreeably to thoſe views, and render the contrary courſe unreaſonable.

IF a future ſtate cannot be demonſtrated, it may however be the greateſt prudence to act as one that has a great many inducements to ſuppoſe there is ſuch a ſtate, and not to run any hazard if it be ſo.

TO be aſſur'd that we can never be concern'd in any thing *hereafter* (as the Lord *Shafteſbury* well obſerves) we muſt perfectly under-

understand what it is that concerns or engages us in any thing present. We must truly *know our selves*; or, in what this SELF of ours consists. We must, as he observes, have some better argument against *pre-existence* than merely that we do not remember it. And, as he says, it is in vain to flatter our selves with an assurance of our interests ending with a certain shape or form; what if all should be revolution? What interested us at first in it, should be consider'd. And, since the *material system* admits of so many alterations and changes, and yet we continue the same consciousness, who knows whether, upon the supposition that *thought* was nothing but the result of matter and motion, but that, when the grosser parts of our bodies are dissolved, those finer parts which are the causes of thinking, may be united to, or lodged in some proper receptacle, and consequently our consciousness still continue? so that I see no security, upon any principles that we can have, that the state of thinking shall discontinue.

To those persons who believe this World to be the Effect of a wise designing Cause, every thing will appear very perplex'd, if a future World be excluded.

BUT not to enter upon many Topicks which do, in different degrees persuade, I should chuse to confine my self within these limits, and endeavour to shew,

 I. THAT

I. THAT *as there is one way of acting, which is most agreeable to the constitution of every individual among reasonable agents, and most conducing to the publick good; and also most suitable to the relation we stand in to God, as our Creator, Preserver and Benefactor, which reason dictates to us*; so

II. THOSE *dictates of Reason, are the Laws of God; or the significations of his Will, that we should act in that manner.* And,

III. SINCE *they are the Laws of God, he must have provided for the observation of them, by annexing such sanctions to them as are every way sufficient, if duly attended unto, to overballance the temptations which may be in our way to neglect the observance of them; or to secure to the obedient, the good which those Laws are design'd as means of producing.*

IV. THAT *what is necessary to the support of Government, will in the Event take place.*

V. THAT *if this be not sufficiently done in the present Life, it is a plain proof that there is a future state of Retribution.*

THESE, *Sir*, are the general heads to which I shall confine my thoughts, the first of which is indeed of the greatest importance, as it most tends to enlighten the subject; for I can hardly

think, that a ſurvey of human nature, together with the infancy of reaſon under its beſt improvements, will ſuffer one much to doubt of the deſign of the Creator to bring it to a more mature ſtate.

PROPOSITION I.

MY firſt propoſition then is, *That there is one way of action, which is moſt agreeable to the Conſtitution of every individual reaſonable agent, and moſt conducing to the publick good, and alſo moſt ſuitable to the relation we ſtand in to God, as our Creator, Preſerver, and Benefactor, which* REASON *dictates to us.*

I PLACE the morality of human actions in this agreement. And conſequently, whilſt the frame and conſtitution of things are, what they now are, they notify to a thinking Being what his conduct ought to be; as truly, as the kind, figure, ſize, and ſuitableneſs of any materials direct an artiſt what parts of matter to make uſe off, to form any piece of work which carries in it ſymetry and proportion.

AND as there is real ſymetry and proportion in nature, altho' from the cuſtoms of different nations and people it may receive accidental variations; or their Ideas may be more or leſs perfect, according to the ſtrength and improvement of their natural faculties; ſo there is in human actions, as related to different things

and perſons, and their different circumſtances, as real an agreement, or difference. And it would be as well and wiſely propoſed, for a man to ſatisfy his hunger by playing on a muſical inſtrument, as it would be to make *any* kind of action ſuit an object under whatever circumſtances and relations;---for inſtance, giving of our good things to a perſon that we know is in a ſtate of fulneſs; and refuſing them to the neceſſitous, is contrary to that ſymetry, reaſon, and proportion that there is in nature, or repugnant to the ſettled relation of things; ſo that the fitneſs of action does not ariſe from opinion or impoſition, but has its foundation in things themſelves; for if the objects are real, and the relations real, *right* and *wrong* are realities alſo.

MORALITY ſuppoſes a natural object, and is a certain ſtate of that object, or ſomewhat with which it is clothed, which is, in a manner, as perceptible to the mind, as the object it ſelf is, conſidered in its Exiſtence. The object conſidered meerly as exiſting, with its properties of exiſtence, is the ground of phyſical knowledge: But the object of moral knowledge is that ſtate, or clothing it ſelf. *e. g.* The Virtue which is charity, ſuppoſes two men; but the man who is the Receiver is not conſider'd meerly as man, but as one in want, honeſt, and as having a diſpoſition to contribute, as far as he can, by his natural activity, to the ſupply of his own neceſſities: Now this *ſtate* of

of a man, may be as real, as the existence of the man is real: And there is as real a suitableness betwixt beneficence and such a man, as there is in any natural proportion: And if the latter is not imaginary, neither is the former. The object of this moral act supposes indeed a man; but his being a man, is not, by it self and directly, the object of my charitable act, but as he is in want, honest, and having a disposition to industry. The fitness therefore of acts to objects, or their suitableness to each other, is that about which morality is conversant. And the discerning and conforming to this, is the most important work a reasonable creature has to do.

But farther, the tendency of an action to give to my self sensitive pleasure or pain, must not be thought to exhaust the whole idea of an action morally good; for that may be right and fit, which has no such effect at present. A man is obliged to be just to others in paying his debts, although himself and family suffer present hardships by it, and it is in it self right and fit that he should. And therefore whenever pleasure and right interfere, as they may do for a time, a man is obliged to postpone his pleasure, and give place to right. Hence, it is unsafe to define a moral action by its procuring to my self the greatest present good; or to make it the same as a present advantagious action. I shall not here dispute, whether man can have no other motives of action but pleasure or pain; but,

but, ſuppoſing this to be the caſe, I would ſay that pleaſures and pains will come under computation. And a preſent pleaſure, which would in its conſequents draw upon me a far more laſting pain, and twenty times as intenſe as the preſent pleaſure, would be irrationally choſen. And even this way, there is a real right or wrong courſe of action, as ſuch action tends to produce ſuch effects.

THESE things being premiſed, I proceed to the conſideration of the propoſition in the branches of which it conſiſts.

§. I. MAN, ſingly conſidered, conſiſts, as to his compoſition, of reaſon, imagination, and ſenſe. And ſuch as his frame is, ſuch ought his action to be. For as his action bears a juſt proportion to his frame, and is adapted to the attainment of the greateſt, and moſt durable good which that compoſition allows of, ſo far his action is right and fit; and ſo far as it prevents that good, and conſiderably interrupts (if it does not totally obſtruct) it, it is irregular; and more ſo, in the degree that it introduces diſorder, and painful reflections or ſenſations. Therefore the true intereſt, and rational obligation of every man, conſiſts in preſerving, as much as poſſible, harmony in his own nature; that there be no ſedition or convulſion within himſelf; that that govern in him which ought to govern, and that obey which ought to obey.

Now

Now it being evident, that reason is the principal faculty, or the distinguishing excellency of humane nature, and design'd to correct the Errors of imagination, and the Exorbitances of the sensitive appetites; whose peculiar province is also to search after truth, and to enquire into the natures, and relations of things, especially as those objects are capable of affecting him with pleasure or pain, and to reflect upon his own actions as suitable to, or as falling beneath the dignity of his own nature as a rational agent, and of consequence, of creating to himself shame and confusion, or of affording to himself matter of satisfaction and joy; This being, I say, the province of Reason, it will follow, that neither the pleasures of sense, or of imagination, are to be indulg'd to such a degree, as is destructive of our health and vigour; nor indeed so as to disable the understanding from attending to its proper objects, and especially to what is the true and principal happiness of man. For, as we find in our natures an irresistible desire of being happy, and yet are conscious that the materials of happiness are not within our selves, but are to be brought in from objects without; the principal use of humane reason lies in searching into the nature and causes of happiness; or what objects are most fitted to produce such a degree of happiness, as our frame and composition will admit.

AND

And if reaſon be our diſtinguiſhing faculty, the principal happineſs of humane nature muſt ariſe from its improvements in diſcerning what moſt conduces to its own intereſt, or what creates the greateſt ſatisfaction to it ſelf. For no man can be approved by himſelf, who contradicts his own judgment of what is fit and becoming him to do; or whoſe actions are perceived not to be conformable to his reaſon.

The proteſts of his own reaſon, or reflection againſt his conduct, are, in the nature of the thing, a cauſe of uneaſineſs; and conſequently, as the principal office of reaſon is to ſearch after the trueſt good, or the moſt real cauſes of happineſs, ſo there can be no ſufficient cauſe of happineſs, but what is adjuſted to the principal faculty in man: which being his reaſon, the ſincereſt and moſt laſting happineſs muſt flow from the mind's being conſcious of its own approbation and purſuit of ſuch things as give reaſon the dominion over Fancy and Senſe: or of its regulating both theſe, ſo as not to cloud and oppreſs the operations of this faculty it ſelf, as having objects of its own which are its proper good: ſuch are the contemplations of cauſes and effects, order and beauty; or a regulation of all theſe in ſuch a manner, as not to ſuffer them to interfere with the regard we owe to the rights and intereſts of other Beings to whom we ſtand related, or to obſtruct the exerciſe of that

that love, or benevolent affection, which we owe to them.

WITHIN these limits all our faculties may have their proper and distinct gratifications, and self-good may be pursued: whatever is beyond them, is irrational, and therefore irregular because irrational: *reason* being, in the order of nature, a rule to a reasonable Being.

INDEED, as Life is the foundation of all enjoyment, the first care of a reasonable creature must be to preserve life. And therefore we must, in the first place, seek after such things as are necessary to support it; and what time we can spare from the pursuits of what is necessary to this end in our respective stations, the study and pursuit of greater degrees of happiness challenge from us. And in proportion to the degrees of time, and opportunities we have when our necessary care about this bodily Life has had its *quota*, the obligation of every man is to study and pursue, principally, what constitutes his principal happiness; and to take the most proper methods to obtain it, either by reading, meditation, and reflection on himself, or by conversation with others, as these are upon observation and experience found most to promote the greatest good.

BUT it follows, from this account, that it can never be the wisdom, nor interest of any of us, to give a loose to our passions; nor to

commit our ſelves to the firſt appearances of things, as our fancy may repreſent them, without conſulting reaſon, and taking the means of informing our reaſon, that we may guard as well as we can againſt deluſion and diſappointment,—and eſteem or regard objects, according to their power to create a more ſuperficial or ſolid, a momentary or a more laſting ſatiſfaction. And conſequently, as to act againſt reaſon, is a real ground of ſhame and remorſe; ſo to lay reaſon aſleep, or to neglect ſober reflection, is obſtructing our real happineſs, or not admitting thoſe objects from whence the trueſt happineſs ariſes to come into the view of the mind. This has an ill effect, if there were no future ſtate, inaſmuch as it deprives a man of perceiving and enjoying the beſt things, as *intellectual truth* and *beauty* certainly are. And if there ſhould happen to be a future ſtate, the indulgence to ſenſe and fancy in unallowable degrees, muſt in ſuch degrees diſqualify for happineſs; for what can we judge of a future ſtate, but that it is, if there be one, deſign'd principally to gratify the nobleſt faculties; but he that conforms his Taſte principally to ſenſual pleaſures, loſes the diſpoſition to enjoy intellectual pleaſures. And therefore the poſſibility that there may be ſuch a ſtate, is a juſt reaſon that we ſhould act ſo now, as not to be indiſpoſed for a happineſs which may be. But I have already ſhewn that ſuch a perſonal conduct as would unfit us, is in it ſelf unreaſonable, and therefore unjuſt.

I Now proceed to consider the second branch of the first proposition.

§. II. THAT *there is one way of acting, which is most conducive to the good of Society, which reason dictates.*

THAT we are born into the world in a naked, defenceless, and indigent condition, cannot be denied; and if we were not born, as it were, into the hands of reason, and tender affection, our condition would be miserable beyond all expression.

To prevent this, our Creator has, by certain inclinations implanted in our nature, even anticipated the exercise of reason; and, by a tenderness, common to us with other animals towards their own Off-spring, taken care for the support of our infant state.

BUT as our intellectual faculties improve, we soon discover the reasonableness of Childrens dutiful respect to their parents, and that we ought to requite their unwearied endeavours of our welfare, with love, and reverence, and obedience to their equitable commands.

THE Parents also, cannot but discern, that as their Off-spring are of the same species with themselves, they are concerned to promote, according to their capacity, the cultivation of their minds.

We may obſerve alſo, that as the *family* encreaſes, their condition, with reſpect to future ſubſiſtence depends upon the joint endeavour of the ſeveral capable parts of this little ſyſtem, to promote each others good: Thoſe whoſe abilities of body or mind, are moſt fitted to act and contrive, are by nature form'd to take care of the weaker: ſo that the Parents, together with their eldeſt Offſpring, muſt contrive and act for the good of the whole family, and keep together ſo long as their mutual neceſſities require.

When the Parents can, with ſuch aſſiſtance as they may receive from their other children, by their proper care ſupport the family, there is the ſame reaſon why their elder Offſpring ſhould join themſelves to each other in a matrimonial ſtate (ſince they have the ſame affections, and the ſame natural liberty) in order to raiſe a diſtinct family from that in which they were born.

Supposing *human race* to have derived from one man and one woman, the World could no other ways be encreas'd, and it was neceſſary to that end, that Brother and Siſter ſhould be Huſband and Wife; but, out of ſuch circumſtances, it is unfit to allow that liberty, or that, without neceſſity, the *firſt partings of nature* ſhould be thus blended and confounded.

There

THERE are also some things which no circumstances will admit, as that a Parent should hate a dutiful Child; but other things will be fit, or unfit, according to variable circumstances: which is a distinction of great use in morality.

IT is to my present purpose to consider, that as Families multiply, division of goods and property become necessary; or, that there should be *meum* and *tuum*. And as the multiplication of mankind multiplies the degrees, if not variety of wants, so barter and exchange will become necessary; and reason discovers, that veracity, justice and equity are the pillars of society; and that in order to enforce the practice of the latter, and for mutual security against such, whom discontent, or a greedy desire of having and possessing may tempt to disturb others in their rights and regular enjoyments, it will be necessary to form a more extensive civil Community; and to agree upon such rules as reason directs for mutual concern and behaviour; and mutually to oblige each other to act according to those rules; and for their better observation, to appoint some persons to whom, for these ends, *viz.* for the more safe enjoyment of their mutual rights, and for the greater security of the good of society, they submit themselves, as being the Guardians and Protectors of it: From which constituted relations a great variety of rules of behaviour result.

AND

And as mankind multiply, the relation of Maſters and Servants will become abſolutely neceſſary to the common good. The narrow circumſtances of ſome, will not admit their providing for themſelves things neceſſary, but by contracting with others, to ſubmit their corporal abilities to be employ'd at the direction, and for the benefit of others; in recompence for which they receive maintenance and wages, from whence many other rules of action derive. But as nature decays, and mens abilities decreaſe, and particular perſons become incapable of ſupporting themſelves, or may happen to be born under ſome natural diſadvantages, *reaſon* directs to a compaſſionate regard to their neceſſities: To what purpoſe elſe was compaſſion planted in human nature? And, as I was once my ſelf helpleſs, and muſt have periſh'd without the kind help of others, and am likely, if I live long, to come into the ſame ſtate, ſo, my *reaſon* tells me, that if I will ſhew no pity to others who now want my help, I ſhall deſerve none hereafter. And from hence, kindneſs to one another, or an inclination, and mutual endeavour to aſſiſt each other all manner of ways, as it has a certain tendency to our own, and alſo to the common good, is highly reaſonable. And conſidering how much of the comfort of life depends upon mutual reſpect, and complacency, the moſt extended affection, which is conſiſtent with a due care of private good, is the certain method to render my own per-

perſon and the Community, as happy as our preſent circumſtances admit. And by how much I ſubſtract of the exerciſe of benevolence to ſwell and encreaſe private good beyond its due boundaries, I take an effectual method (ſince others have the ſame liberty as my ſelf) to obſtruct, if not entirely prevent my own perſonal welfare: inaſmuch as the public contributes more force or activity to my private good, than it is poſſible for me to return to them; and conſequently, my happineſs is neceſſarily, in the nature and reaſon of things, involved in, or connected with the publick good. From whence it is evident, that there is real moral ſocial virtue, as there are communities; and the reality of the one, is not greater than the reality of the other. Which was the thing to be prov'd.

I Now proceed to the third and laſt part of the firſt propoſition, *viz.*

§. III. That there is a certain way of acting, moſt becoming the relation we ſtand in to that Being who is our Creator, Preſerver, and Benefactor, which reaſon dictates to us.

He that cannot preſerve himſelf in Being, muſt depend moſt certainly upon ſome other Being as the cauſe of his. And as we find mankind, and all animals, have but a temporary exiſtence, they, and all mankind muſt have a Maker, or Chuſer of their Being what they

they now are, and of whatever they can be in any part of duration; and if the nobleſt Beings we know are derived from another, this cauſe can be no leſs than an intelligent deſigning cauſe; and therefore they cannot be the produce of ſenſeleſs, unintelligent matter.

And as, whatever intermediate Cauſes there may be, ſome original deſigning Cauſe there muſt be, which is it ſelf active, as well as intelligent, and not only ſo, but that Cauſe muſt be free from compulſion; nothing but the perceived fitneſs, and goodneſs of the things to be form'd, could be the inducement to him to make them; and he could be under no conſtraint to do what he did, or be under the influence of any phyſical neceſſity, becauſe there is none above him; neither could he act, conſidered as a wiſe and ſelf-ſufficient Being, from malevolence and ill-will; or make any ſenſitive, or reaſonable creature with that view, that it ſhould be, becauſe it was made, miſerable; or by his own arbitrary will, diſpoſe one Being into ſuch circumſtances, as that, meerly by its exiſtence, this ſhould be miſerable, and another happy. But, as this all-wiſe Being had an idea of the thing to be made, and of what that thing was fitted to produce, and as this Idea was to the divine underſtanding beautiful, and its being beautiful was the reaſon of bringing it into exiſtence; and if intelligent and ſelf-active, it muſt be capable of encreaſing its happineſs, by the exerciſe of its faculties upon

on ſuch objects as it perceives ſuitable to produce it: Every ſuch rational Being, conſider'd as an agent, cannot but be amiable to its Maker, in proportion to its active endeavour to preſerve it ſelf in, and conform it ſelf to the true intents and ends of its own Being; as ſtanding in ſuch relations, and performing ſuch acts as it is capable of with reſpect to its own make and frame, or as related to the Community, or towards himſelf, as the author and head of this intellectual Community. For, in this way, the thing exiſting is as beautiful, as it was in the divine idea; and conſequently there is the ſame reaſon to be pleas'd with, and to approve of the Being, as of the Idea; and in the proportion that it recedes from that order of acting, is in the ſame degree unamiable to him that made it.

To create, and preſerve, do not, of themſelves, lay a rational foundation for adoration, love, reverence, ſubmiſſion, fear, hope, truſt, thankſgiving, and praiſe, but as the Creator and Preſerver employs his natural perfections for benevolent purpoſes; the Author of Being, is, in reſpect of his inherent excellencies, and good affections, moſt worthy of admiration, reverence, and adoration. Towards him, as having the concurrence of all poſſible perfection, and the moſt equal and kind diſpoſitions, ſhould the mind aſpire. Him we ſhould love with a ſuperlative affection, ſince, from the cloſeſt union with him by knowledge and love,

the pureſt, and moſt ſatisfying delight muſt reſult; whoſe loving kindneſs is of more concern to our happineſs, than that of the univerſe beſides; him ſhould we fear to offend, who can inflict upon us the utmoſt degree of miſery; who from his holineſs diſapproves and hates all iniquity. To his orders we ſhould ſubmit, as to thoſe of a Being who is perfectly wiſe, who perceives the neareſt and ſhorteſt way to attain the happineſs of which I am capable; and being ſelf-ſufficient, can have no private intereſt which interferes with, or any way oppoſes the happineſs of his obedient creatures. Him we ſhould depend on; hope and truſt in. To him ſhould we ſeek by Prayer, for the ſupply of our wants. To him ſhould we give thanks, and render our continual praiſes.

THAT theſe are dictates of reaſon evidently follows from our having an idea of God, and faculties capable of ſuch acts: and no other object is qualified to have the mind ſo converſant about it; it has neither the natural qualification, nor the merit. So that ſuch acts are exactly ſuited to what he is, and does; and to deny him ſuch acknowledgment, is apparently unjuſt. So that there is, morally ſpeaking, or in reſpect of our behaviour towards God, piety, or impiety, as certain as there is God and Creature; and conſequently, morality has as ſure a foundation as the exiſtence of things.

I Now

I NOW proceed to the ſecond propoſition,

PROPOSITION II.

THAT *theſe dictates of Reaſon are the laws of God; or the ſignifications of his* will *that we ought ſo to act.*

HAD not God exiſted we never could have been. And as the conſtitution and frame of things, and the mutual dependance they have upon one another is from him, ſo, all thoſe judgments which, upon attention and application, we make conſonant to that ſtate of things, muſt be ſuch as he wills we ſhould make.

FOR as he gave us thoſe faculties to exerciſe, ſo, what is the reſult of that regular exerciſe of them, muſt be his law. As he deſign'd thoſe faculties for ſome end, ſo they could have no valuable end, but to diſcover Truth and Goodneſs, to promote order and happineſs.

AND therefore, what appears right and good to us, muſt likewiſe appear ſo to him: For, if in the *regular* uſe of our faculties, *we* judge and conclude one thing, and *God* ſhould judge otherwiſe, there would be endleſs confuſion and contradiction in the intellectual world. On the contrary, as far as our ideas are clear

with reſpect to the ſuitableneſs of ſuch a way of acting towards objects in ſuch a particular ſtate and relation, all rational Beings muſt have the ſame thoughts of the ſame things: and conſequently, the divine judgment muſt harmonize with every dictate of reaſon, with reſpect to what is fit to be choſen, or avoided. And, as God is a Being that is pure and holy, always approving or diſapproving according to his unerring judgment of what is fit and right, he muſt will, that we ſhould act according to our judgments *truly* made; *i. e.* according to ſuch judgment as are neither the reſult of *fancy*, nor of any *irregular affection*, which are the ſources of error and miſtake, and frequently put a falſe bias upon the judging faculty with reſpect to our conduct: and it ought to be the great concern of every man to guard againſt their influence. Let it be carefully obſerv'd in conſequence of this propoſition, That thoſe things which before appear'd as dictates of reaſon, and were ſtil'd *virtues* or *vices*, muſt be now conſider'd as *duties* or *tranſgreſſions*: Since the ſupreme Being, by virtue of his creative act, and the propriety he has in us ariſing from it, has a right to oblige us to determine our actions conformably to our perceptions of what is fit to be done. And by the ſame act of reaſon that we know we are his creatures, we alſo may know that obligation.

Propo-

PROPOSITION III.

SINCE *these dictates of reason are the laws of God, he must have provided for the observation of them, by annexing such* SANCTIONS *to them, as if duly attended to, are sufficient to over-ballance the temptations mankind may have to neglect the observance of them.*

BY SANCTIONS, I understand such natural good or evil, pleasure or pain arising out of obedience or disobedience, as if duly attended to, will excite or restrain the agent.

MAN is a sensitive as well as rational Being, and although the interest of both may be adjusted so as to act unitedly to the good of the whole; yet since they are in nature and kind distinct, there may be a separation of interests.

ANIMAL appetites and affections do of themselves incline to their respective objects; and every grateful impression enlivens the passion: and the more frequently those impressions are repeated, the inclination acquires greater strength; this, in the nature of things, is unavoidable.

AND as sense and fancy have the advantage of starting first, so, during the infancy of reason and reflection, these tendencies have in them nothing

thing directly criminal, becauſe, as yet, there is not in nature an oppoſite power of reſiſting and controuling.

We only come at this by diſcerning an higher intereſt that reaſon has of its own, and by comparing things together we perceive in which way it may be promoted; this is oppoſed by the over-indulged ſenſe and appetite; but by the exerciſe of *conſideration*, we become capable of controuling thoſe appetites and affections gradually, and of reducing them into better order: without which capacities we do not commence moral agents, which ſuppoſes power antecedent to obligation, or that, to the neareſt or moſt immediate act of duty, there is firſt a power given. The *Theological Queſtion* which aſks, whence is that power now derived? is of no uſe, as to the preſent caſe; it being evident, that if God be now the Governour of mankind by laws, he has furniſh'd them, ſome way or other, with powers to comply with the neareſt acts of duty. As ſoon then as the mind becomes capable of diſcerning moral differences, and is excited to attend to them, then law, and obligation takes place. And as our determinations and actions accord with the reaſon of our minds, we perform our duty, or on the contrary, commit ſin. And the obligation riſes higher in proportion as our opportunities and means of improving reaſon are greater. And we ſhould ſtir up our ſelves to ſet reaſon on the throne, which by *conſideration*, *practice*, and

and *prayer*, may be effected: the last being an exercise in which the Soul subjects it self to this demand; and by its strivings to be what it should, it attains, in some measure, to be what it ought.

HERE then commences the war between flesh and spirit. And it is very observable, that our passions do not grow very irregular till we are of some age, and then *the law in the members* wars against the law of the mind.

SENSE and appetite, by their earlier possession of us, being come now to some poignancy of gust, and the love of pleasure being strong, and yet the mind perceiving that there may be criminality in those pleasures, and feeling some trouble, shame and fear attending those sensual enjoyments, which it is conscious it has indulg'd in a forbidden degree, and having by experience learn'd that there is evil as well as good, then comes on the compleat obligation to resist evil: each degree of which resistance is the mind's triumph! it congratulates it self in every such act of dominion, and feels a secret pleasure over-spreading it self. This, like other sensations, will decay, although the approbation of it self as having done right, remains.

THERE is also a conviction remaining of what is evil, even when remorse, fear, and shame are worn out; but notwithstanding this, corporal impressions awaken the former desire of

of these pleasures, and if we suffer the forbidden object to be familiar, and revolve it in the mind, and let fancy enlarge the prospect, the sense of pleasure will be more quick in its operations to enflame desire, than reason to raise aversion and abhorrence from the turpitude of the action:——reason it self informs us, that to oppose future pain to present unlawful pleasure, and future pleasure to present pain, (which may in many instances attend virtue at present,) and that in both kinds it be such as shall preponderate in a considerable degree, and, if duly considered, be sufficient to allay and cool the desire, and so guard against the passion, is the best and most effectual security against the growth of sinful inclinations, and for cherishing virtuous ones. For this is opposing sense to sense. It is plain that the duplicity in our natures, or variety of interest, is that which creates the danger of transgressing. For no man would oppose a reasonable rule of life, but for the pleasing of some appetite, which cannot be gratified, in that particular way or degree, but by transgressing the law of reason. Desires are raised by the appearance and impulse of objects, and are generally painful till satisfied or repelled. There are but two ways to do this; Either by bare reasoning; or by raising some opposite passion or sense; altho' it may not operate so strongly as the irregular sensitive passion does. For,

LIGHT, considered alone, shews us indeed our duty; but the weight of pleasure lying on the

the contrary ſide, the fear of ſome greater evil to follow, is (with the generality, if not in ſome circumſtances with all men) neceſſary to aid and aſſiſt reaſon to throw off that which biaſſes the other way, till the habit of virtue be confirm'd.

THE deſire of pleaſure is ſtronger than the love of naked truth; and therefore in order to break off our commerce with any favourite paſſion, the ſenſe of the danger of indulging it is abſolutely neceſſary: or that ſome time or other the pain conſequent upon that indulgence, will be greater than the preſent pleaſure. For to what purpoſe ſhould I deny my ſelf any gratification from which no hurt will follow? The deſire of happineſs will be uppermoſt, if there be nothing but the meer reaſonableneſs and fitneſs to oppoſe it, in ſuch weak and frail Beings as we are. Therefore meer Laws, or declarations of the will of God, which have no other effect, are not ſufficient to keep us ſteady and firm to a uniform courſe of Obedience.

AND therefore, as God is a wiſe Lawgiver, he muſt have annexed ſuch ſanctions to his Laws as are ſufficient, if conſider'd, to work upon our fears or hopes; that ordinarily no temptation from preſent pleaſure or pain, ſhould be, in the nature and reaſon of things, efficacious enough to draw us off from the path of virtue.

WHAT effect ſuch ſanctions may have *in the event* upon the agents, is, of diſtinct conſideration from what they ought to have *at preſent*; becauſe men may, if they pleaſe, neglect to inform themſelves, and live inconſiderate and careleſs as to the conſequence of their actions.

THE ſum of this propoſition is — That as man is both rational and ſenſitive, and the danger of tranſgreſſing lies chiefly in the force of our animal affections, which are continually ſolicited by preſent objects, it is neceſſary that laws, in order to their being effectual, ſhould, as they are obey'd or diſobey'd, be attended with a more ſenſible good or evil than can be had in the greateſt pleaſures of ſin, or which may be endured in the courſe of virtue: otherwiſe, there is no ſufficient rational motive to comply with them. That I call a ſufficient rational motive, which is ſufficiently adapted to our preſent Conſtitution: But unleſs we can be more happy in the way of virtue, than of vice, we have not ſufficient motive to fall in with the ſide of virtue: nor to forſake vice, if the pain of following it, is not greater than the pleaſure of it. No man falls in with vice to ſatisfy his reaſon, but to reap pleaſure; and ſhould pleaſure in reality, and continuedly lie on the ſide of vice, and pain on the ſide of virtue, the temptation muſt be too ſtrong; becauſe the Idea of order, and the beauties of it,

ſtill

ſtill accompanied with an overplus of pain, is not a ſufficient match for the natural attraction of pleaſure, or our averſion to pain: If it was, a contemplative mind might be happy in *Phalaris*'s Bull.

PROPOSITION IV.

THE *fourth Propoſition will admit of eaſy proof, if the preceding ones are well ſupported,* viz. *That what is neceſſary to the ſupport of Government, will finally take place.*

To ſuppoſe that God ſhould give men faculties by which they collect ſuch things to be their duty, and that he has annexed ſuch ſanctions to thoſe laws, and yet, that in the event, the ſinner ſhall fare as well as the obedient, is for God to throw up all government, and to act in contrariety to himſelf; it is, to be concern'd to maintain order and virtue, by laying ſuch reſtrictions upon his creatures, and then to lay all open again by an unconcernedneſs whether laws are obey'd or not. This will never agree with the known characters of the ſupreme Being, as wiſe and holy; as having a juſt regard to public order, and to keep his reaſonable creature out of the ſtrongeſt temptations to do evil: nothing would render a human Governor more contemptible than this, and therefore this muſt be at the fartheſt remove from the King of the Univerſe. I do not intend to ſay that God muſt puniſh ſin by the ſame neceſſity that

he exists: for to punish or spare, is his right, in that latitude which consists with the reasons of Government; but, that such as have transgress'd to that degree, that to pardon them relaxes government, and diminishes the just fear of his displeasure, cannot be conceiv'd suitable to his moral Character.

Proposition V.

That *therefore, if there be not sufficient distinction made betwixt the virtuous and the vitious, in the present life, this is a plain proof that there is a future state.*

That I call a sufficient distinction, which gives the encouragement to virtue, and lays an effectual restraint upon vice, if seriously considered.

Having therefore already prov'd, that there is a *rule* to measure actions by, whether they are right or wrong, the Question is, Whether, supposing no future state, the virtuous man has sufficient encouragement to keep close to the rule of right; or there be, on the other hand, discouragement enough laid in the way of the sinner: and whether God has either way sufficiently shewn his approbation or abhorrence of the one or the other?

In order to determine this, I shall consider the effects of virtue and vice, either as to their natu-

natural consequences, and what may in any way be observ'd to attend the one or the other, and so as to become sufficient motives to keep close to a course of virtue, or to deter from vice.

First, I SHALL consider the effects of virtue and vice.

THE effects of virtue are self-approbation, and honour amongst men, so far as other men are dispos'd to esteem and treat suitably a virtuous character.

THE virtuous man also, in the degree that he is so, apprehends himself the object of divine approbation.

THE Sinner when he thinks soberly, is the object of his own dislike, and of the contempt of others who are of a different disposition, and is the object of divine hatred.

FOR the divine regards are founded in reason; in the same degree that he loves righteousness, in the same degree he hates vice: and therefore if God be holy and righteous in his proceedings, whether men are good or bad in a higher or lower degree, perfectly or imperfectly, it having been prov'd that God governs the world, and it being suppos'd that Death makes an end of us, the advantage must lie on the side of the virtuous man, and it will

appear

appear reaſonable that he ſhould be in the happieſt ſtate. For, altho' a virtuous man may not deſerve to live for ever, but as his virtue is imperfect, might ceaſe to be, as well as the habitual ſinner; yet, his condition whilſt he does exiſt, does certainly deſerve better of the Almighty, than that of the ſinner, and to be exempted from affliction in a far greater degree than He: For, there certainly is a comparative difference. One fears God, and the other fears him not; *one* labours to promote the public good, the *other* draws to himſelf whatever he can; *one* lives up to the dignity of his nature, and the *other* in a great degree levels himſelf with the Beaſts. God appoints one ſort of acting, and forbids the other; but equally, as we now ſuppoſe, ſhuts up both theſe ſorts of agents in the grave without any farther intention.

THAT we may ſee whether, upon this ſuppoſition, ſufficient encouragement be given to keep cloſe to the rules of virtue, let us take into conſideration the ſtate of the *righteous* man.

AND here it muſt be obſerv'd, that virtue and piety do not make a man happy, purely by themſelves, but as they lead alſo to enjoyment; for it muſt be conſider'd, that a man can enjoy happineſs of one kind, even that of eaſy conſciouſneſs, but very imperfectly; unleſs he is, or hopes to be, free from other uneaſy

easy circumstances which virtue cannot remove; and therefore virtue and piety cannot of themselves, and without taking in such views and prospects, secure to a man any happy or pleasurable enjoyment of himself.

GOOD and *bad men* therefore may be consider'd in very different outward circumstances; or in such as are, as to their influence upon the content of the mind, pretty near upon the ballance.

AS to the first sort, there are variety of cases.

SOME very virtuous men have very unhealthy constitutions, and endure many grievous pains; are in no condition to procure to themselves, but with great difficulty, the necessaries of life, and therefore are incapable of attaining what may administer any comfort to them; yet these men are modest and humble; reverence their Maker, and are cautious to avoid all moral evil.

OTHERS of the same stamp, and subject to the same infirmities, have the additional trouble of being reduced to absolute poverty by losses which they meet with, occasion'd by the injurious dealings of others with them; and, perhaps, are by these means themselves thrown into *jail* by some unmerciful creditor, where after they have suffered much affliction they end

end their miſerable lives, and their wives and children are expos'd to beggary.

A THIRD ſort, purely for conſcience ſake, are expos'd to ſuffer torments of various kinds; rack'd almoſt to death, and then reſpited to go through the ſame torture again; till at laſt nature can hold out no longer, and rather than deny their Maker, they offer up their lives a ſacrifice to him.——

IT is an undoubted dictate of reaſon that God ſhould never be denied, or his glory given to another, altho' life, and all the comforts of it, ſhould lie at ſtake; and what reaſon forbids, God does alſo forbid; upon this account, it is a neceſſary part of the homage we owe to him, to recognize him as ſovereign Lord, and never prefer the will of another in contradiction to his authority.

THESE three ſorts are miſerable in life, notwithſtanding their continuance in a virtuous courſe of action; and the laſt is purely ſo by his virtue.

The Queſtion now is, whether with reſpect to theſe men, God acts up to the Character of a good Governor, and agreeably to his approbation of virtue, by ſuffering thoſe men who really obey him, to be under very painful and uneaſy ſenſations; and to ſuffer millions of enormous Tranſgreſſors to flow in wealth,

live

live in ease, and diversify their pleasures; to have nothing to fear after death, and go out of the world with far less pain than the persons above-mentioned?

If personal virtue under these circumstances has sufficient encouragement, if the motives to public spiritedness can operate forcibly enough, if natural piety has its present sufficient effect, if the virtuous man be, upon the comparison, treated as the wisdom, holiness, and goodness of God require, then I must confess, that, in respect to him, there is no reason to conclude a *future state* from the principles of natural light. But if unrighteousness be not sufficiently discouraged, upon this supposition that death puts an end to us, then the supposition it self is false, for bad men must be in a state of punishment; and so a future state will be prov'd.

I Shall now therefore faithfully examine what may be said to prove, that the virtuous man, upon the supposition of no future state at all, is sufficiently taken care of, with respect to the circumstances afore-mentioned.

It may be said, that the persons above specify'd have the comfort of a good conscience, and the approbation of God, which is a sufficient recompence. In answer to this it may be observ'd, that the witness of conscience receives its force from the approbation of God,

or from the ſenſe we have that he approves our ways; but, if you take away from that approbation the bleſſing he has in reſerve for them who act a virtuous part now, even thoſe tokens of his reſpect to them, which they ſhall receive, after having given conſiderable proof of their faithfulneſs to him; take away a future ſtate of peace and reſt, *God's approbation* will then be a very intricate thing, if not altogether unintelligible: for, to leave his faithful ſervants in a far worſe condition as to happineſs than what is generally the ſtate of wicked men, is an odd way (as it ſeems) of approving them. Is it not cuſtomary for all reaſonable Beings, to diſtinguiſh, by ſome peculiar benefits, thoſe they moſt favour? Does a wiſe Parent content himſelf with approving his dutiful Child, without ſuccouring and defending him; and providing for his happineſs, rather than for that of a rebellious and prodigal Son? Would not the laying outward advantages on the ſide of rebellion; and poverty, diſgrace, and ſuffering, on the ſide of dutiful behaviour, quite confound any man as to the meaning of approbation? Has God's approbation no other effect than to leave the good man in miſery, and even to be at laſt over-power'd by it? Should not actions and ſentiments correſpond with each other?

SUPPOSING, on the other hand, the reality of a future ſtate, and that virtue is only put to a preſent trial, the difficulty then vaniſhes. But how to make this conſiſt with the attributes

butes of God, ſuppoſing nothing future, is, I think, an inſuperable difficulty.

You will ſay that virtue is its own reward; that there is an intrinſic goodneſs in it; and that the dutiful perſon does what is right and fit. This I grant to be true, provided, the perſon is otherwiſe, as a ſenſitive Being, tolerably taken care of. For his compoſition being made up of ſenſe and reaſon, the ſenſitive part muſt undoubtedly be conſider'd — It is true, *the conſciouſneſs of doing reaſonable actions, will always be matter of ſatisfaction, when compared, purely, with unreaſonable ones; for virtue and vice, as they differ in their nature, ſo they muſt differ alſo in their effects.*

But it muſt be obſerv'd, that happineſs reſults from the tolerably good ſtate of the whole Being, and therefore altho' virtue be always a cauſe of rational happineſs, as oppos'd to vice, ſo that, in the compariſon, the wicked man is always the unhappy perſon when conſider'd by himſelf, yet, in reſpect of the whole Being, the ſenſitive uneaſineſs may prevail in that degree, that the mental pleaſure, reſulting from virtue, may be as none, becauſe of the much greater weight of outward affliction which may be upon the virtuous perſon, who has, as we now ſuppoſe, no farther proſpect than this life. *For illuſtration let us ſuppoſe a caſe*, if a man was ſentenc'd to be rack'd to death for ſaying, that Gratitude is right and comely with reſpect

to a Benefactor, he may indeed, through the weight and length of his misery, disavow the assertion, but his judgment cannot alter; this shews that virtue and happiness may part for a time, and that happiness and virtue are not, in the notion, absolutely inseparable. The consciousness of virtue may be permanent, but virtue and piety do not make a man happy, but as they lead to enjoyment. Experience tells us that pain is pain, and equally so whether a man be good or bad, so far as sense is concern'd: although, as far as resolution fortifies the mind, that may be less affected by it. So that let virtue have as much satisfaction as can be suppos'd to arise from the consciousness of an honourable and dutiful action, yet the whole Being is made miserable, or left miserable in its virtue, if afflictions press in such a degree as to hold the mind attentive to them without any prospect of relief.

FROM the whole, I think, it plainly appears, that a wise and good Being, who has prescrib'd a Law which is to have no effect beyond the present existence of the subject, must also, from his perfection have provided, that no other condition of the virtuous agent, should hinder him from reaping a superior pleasure in the exercise of his virtue. But the case appears different in the three sorts above-mentioned, and therefore with respect to these Persons, I think the matter is plain, that a happiness is reserv'd for them in a future state.

I SHALL *next consider those persons, whose circumstances are pretty near upon a ballance.*

AND as to such whose outward circumstances are so near upon a state of equality, that the rational happiness of virtue remains as opposed to vice, so that afflictions do not break in upon it, and divert the mind from attention to it, a future state does not appear necessary; Virtue will render its possessor more happy than the transgressor, when these are compared together.

THIS is evident, as far as their personal management and conduct reaches. But, as the common happiness depends upon the joint effort of the respective members of the Society to promote the public good, they that contribute all they can towards it, are deserted by the inactivity of some, and opposed by the fraud, treachery, and injustice of others, who by rapine, violence, and falshood, draw to themselves such advantages as do not belong to them, and plainly deprive others of that farther good which they have a just right to, and must enjoy, if others did concur with them. And as God has instituted these Laws, it is reasonable to think that the Legislator, who approves of this course, should order things so that those men who pursue those rules, as they are such a number of men, should reap those fruits which their virtue has a natural tendency to pro-

produce, and which are frustrated by the sloth, or disorderly actions of others.

How often is the peace and welfare of nations expos'd to the utmost hazard, and, sometimes, entirely overthrown by the restless and factious spirits of its inhabitants? And at all times, how much does it require of the activity, vigilance, and care of the honest and public-spirited, to prevent such dismal effects, arising from the precipitant passions, or prepense malice of others? Do not these brave men deserve to live in a more orderly Society? And is it not reasonable to think that a wise and good Being should design some better state for them, who cultivate all the benevolent affections? Are these kind of virtues only design'd to maintain a combate, and expire in the opposition they meet with!—Who can think it?

If we remove the scene to the immediate acts of piety and worship, those men who employ their thoughts upon the divine attributes and excellencies, who have the highest veneration of God, and contemplate the amplitude, and almost infinite variety of his works, the wonderful forecast expres'd in his adjusting of means to ends; and, from these considerations, are transported with the inherent excellencies of the Being it self, which apprehension breaks out into all the proper acts of devotion, must, in the nature of the thing, possess a more solid happiness, than can possibly accrue from other objects;

objects: and therefore the pious man must, if we regard the nature and quality of the action, be in the best condition, when these pleasures are compar'd with other pleasures.

But, if you suppose these men to carry with them the perception, that within a few years this glorious object will disappear, with all its lustre; that then they shall for ever be deprived of the sweetest of all pleasures, because their thinking powers themselves shall cease, it seems to me a just doubt, whether, after the mind is once possessed of that thought, it be possible ever after to think so highly and worthily of that Being, who has indeed with great profusion expressed his power and art. Nevertheless *man*, the noblest part of the visible creation, and the *virtuous man*, who most nearly resembles him, [and therefore one would think should be the chiefest object of his care,] is in duration of far less continuance than the dead, material parts of it: has no prerogative above the sinner as to continuance, and even his highest pleasures, upon reflection, create him the greatest sorrows, since they must all be parted with in a little time. For, if annihilation be in it self the object of our strong aversion, what a damp must it cast upon all devotion, to think, that the most exquisite pleasures must at last resolve into insensibility; and yet the principles of reason oblige us to love God with our hearts and souls. I may add here, that our reasonable powers are of all others the slowest in coming

coming into exercise, and yet all confess that they are the noblest: how strange is it, that those powers which are so late in their exercise, and require so much pains to cultivate them, should be so short in duration, when Sense and Fancy almost as soon as we exist, are in some possession of their objects?

I COME now to enquire, whether bad men are punished, in this life, in such a degree, as that the evils they feel, consequent upon transgression, are sufficient, if duly attended to, to restrain from vice.

I KNOW, if we consider merely the event, even the supposition of future punishment does not operate upon multitudes to cause any reformation. But that which I am now to consider, is, whether, in the nature of things, a sufficient restraint be laid upon such as are disposed to act viciously, supposing nothing future.

Now the checks upon men arise, either from the consideration of the moral turpitude of the action, or from the natural effects of vice upon the bodily constitution, or the uneasiness the sinner may feel in contradicting the judgment of his own mind, the disapprobation of God, the discredit it may bring upon him from men, or the punishments annexed to wrong action by humane laws.

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As to the turpitude of immoral actions, this indeed appears plain in the grosser acts, and in those especially which are contrary to nature; in other instances it requires a finer eye to see the deformity, so as to create a suitable aversion, when any temptation arises from interest or lust. For we very often see that men, by the influence of their passions, are led on to perpetrate the foulest crimes, when once the heart is influenced by nourishing the criminal desire.

How often do princes, for the sake of glory and dominion, sacrifice the lives of multitudes of innocent people, and break through the strongest ties of humanity? And with what frequency do private men transgress the rules of justice, and stifle the sense of honour and decency? I grant, it generally costs men some pains to do this; but the prospect of some interest or pleasure, not otherwise attainable, when suffered to fix upon the mind, and to heat the imagination, may, by degrees, so far weaken the sense of the evil, that the uneasiness they find in suspending the gratification of those desires, may carry them on with that violence that may hinder the operation of reason in serious reflection, although their notion that it is evil may still remain.

In this case, a strong fear of danger seems absolutely necessary to aid the judgment of the

mind, and its neceſſity is too much confirmed by general experience. Paſſion tends to cloud reaſon, when once admitted; and what can guard againſt the ſtrong impulſe of the proſpect of pleaſure, but the foreſight of greater conſequent evil which will follow upon criminal indulgences? Were there no biaſs upon the mind by the influence of paſſion, undoubtedly reaſon would carry it; for as has been obſerved before, no reaſonable Being would oppoſe a reaſonable rule of life, were it not for the weight of concupiſcence on the other ſide. And our paſſions would not ordinarily gain thoſe advantages, were they timely reſiſted; but paſſion ſooths and flatters, and the deſire of pleaſure will, when the imagination is fill'd with it, prevail againſt the dictate of the mind, *that the action is wrong*, if the pleaſure of enjoying appears far greater than the pleaſure of abſtaining; or, if the pain that follows doing contrary to right, does not appear greater than the preſent pleaſure, the ſtrongeſt deſire will ſway the Agent to determine that way it directs: For things do not operate upon us merely by their rectitude, but alſo by their aptitude to create pleaſure or pain; and therefore whenever pleaſure appears, and nothing of equal force to oppoſe it, the deſire of happineſs being the moſt radicated principle in us, it will prevail againſt the notion of truth, if conformity to truth does not afford the greateſt pleaſure when all things are compared. It is in this caſe ſuppos'd, that there is ſome good appears

greater

greater than any other, only truth or juſtice ſtands in its way; I muſt break through ſome rights of others to come at it, yet the thing is greatly to be deſired, and I languiſh for the want of it. Is it not plain here, that unleſs the rules of right are fortified by the annexing ſuch proſpects of ſuperior degrees of evil, as ſhall guard the Laws of right, that there are not ſufficient diſcouragements to moral evil? And ſince, according to the preſent ſuppoſition, *there is no future puniſhment*, muſt there not be, in the preſent diſpenſation of God, ſuch a difference in the ſtate of bad men, to that of the good, as ſhall, if duly conſidered, be a ſufficient diſcouragement to vice; and if it be not ſo now, then certainly there is a future ſtate.

THE caſe is this; the Sinner does prefer ſomewhat to virtue, as moſt pleaſing and deſireable to him, although he cannot ſay the way is virtuous in it ſelf: One is ſtruck with the beauty of another man's wife, and cannot be eaſy without enjoying her: Another could live much more to his content if he was maſter of ſo much money, which he deſpairs to obtain in a juſt way. Theſe men do not loſe the notions of right and wrong, yet they give the preference to theſe pleaſures and advantages: Theſe are greater goods to them; and, in ſuch a caſe, what can reſtrain, but the fear of a greater conſequent evil? Without this, the man is left unguarded.

BUT upon our present hypothesis, *there is no evil to come, all is in this life.* Let us then consider the strength of those evils which are present.

SOME men impair their health, and break their constitutions, and bring upon themselves distempers, and a speedier death.

I GRANT that these things, when they come, are sufficient to make a man see his folly. But these are by no means the distinguishing punishments of vice, although they are the effect of it in such persons; because a virtuous man, even in the pursuit of his virtue, may by over-intense study, and painful labour in the acquist of it, bring diseases and death upon himself sooner, than if he had not applied his thoughts with so much vigour to that course of action. How many of the most brave and virtuous part of mankind have impair'd their health, introduced distempers, and have been cut off in the midst of their days?

AGAIN, it is worthy consideration, that this renders the Sinner the more criminal, in that he makes light of, and puts so little value upon the blessings of health, strength, and life, by sacrificing these to his pleasures.

IT ought also to be considered, that many, by the firmness of their constitutions, escape these

these evils, and extend life to its common term although they are very vicious.

If the uneasiness the sinner feels be objected, as he stands condemned in his own mind, this, supposing nothing future, will have but little effect; for, as the operations of Conscience which are pungent, arise from the fears of future judgment, if there be no ground for any such fear, the reason of his dislike must rest upon the intrinsic evil, or turpitude of sin, which I have before considered.

The disapprobation of God, when there is nothing farther to be fear'd than what there is observ'd to attend the Transgressor at present, will signify as little: if there be some temporal calamities that befal bad men, there are generally more and greater that attend a state of virtue; and consequently, since there is a great deal of pains to be taken in reforming vicious habits, men will excuse themselves from that labour.

As to general discredit, there are numbers enough of transgressors to keep one another in countenance, although the sobrer part of mankind dislike such practices.

As to human Laws, they concern outward actions, and takes no cognizance of what passes within. A man may be as wicked as he pleases in respect to his thoughts and inclinations; and even as to his outward actions, by wary or cau-

cautious management; he may be very bad in himſelf, and miſchievous to others, without incurring much danger, except in ſome caſes. And therefore, although Laws have their great uſe, yet they are not calculated to ſerve as univerſal remedies againſt ſin; ſo that, if all the puniſhment of ſin terminates in this world, there does not appear a ſufficient reſtraint upon moral evil; no, nor ſufficient ſecurity to civil Government it ſelf, which cannot ſubſiſt (as men are diſpoſed generally) without the proſpects of futurity. And therefore all Lawgivers have been forc'd to introduce a belief of the *Gods*, and a *future ſtate* to awe the multitude.

I MIGHT add to all this, the conſideration that God is the Governor of the World, neceſſarily infers, that he will ſufficiently vindicate his own Laws, and ſupport his own authority; and will, with an even hand, diſpenſe good or evil according to the merit or demerit of the ſubject, all things conſider'd. *Order* is dear to the Deity, as being that which appears beautiful and lovely to him; and they who voluntarily and continuedly pervert it, offend againſt him; and therefore from his holineſs he is inclin'd to puniſh an impenitent tranſgreſſor: This is in it ſelf right and fit, and therefore God will do it; unleſs it can be prov'd, that in this World there are ſufficiently diſtinguiſhing puniſhments upon very wicked men, which, from the premiſes does not appear to be at preſent inflicted.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Some Axioms laid down, and Conclusions drawn from them to prove the Use and Advantage of an express Revelation.

FROM what has been advanced, I may safely depend on the perspicuity and clearness of such principles as these, *viz.* That I am a creature of God, dependent on him both for being, its continuance, and for every advantagious circumstance that attends my being. Hence also it appears, that as I am a creature, and as such, dependent; so I am as plainly a subject of his Government, whose I am, and on whom I depend. And as all Beings derive their existence from a *first cause*, so that unoriginated Being must be Rector and Lord of all.

I PROCEED therefore to lay down a few axioms, on which I would support some other moral principles.

AND, *First*, that Being which I call GOD is possessed of unalterable perfection; or, of an invariable rectitude of nature.

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ALL effects which proceed immediately from, or are directly produc'd by this Being, must be uniform and regular.

VARIOUS and different *Ends*, such I mean, as are inconsistent with, or contradictory to each other, could never be either design'd or effected by such an agent or cause, since they would prove a want of that *invariable rectitude of Nature*, which must ever characterize that *Being* which is their supposed cause.

IF *Ends* thus repugnant to each other can never be the object of such a Being's purpose or pursuit, neither can any *Means* be ever propos'd, appointed, or ordained by him, which are suited to produce such contradictory *Ends*.

THE whole frame of things universally prove, that the good or happiness of the creature was the great *End* the Creator had in view; for this cou'd only consist with the goodness or benignity of his nature who brought them into being;— this is strongly confirm'd by a series of continued acts of his providence contributing thereunto: and it is by means of our comparing the footsteps of creating power, with the methods and order of providential government that we can come at such demonstrative evidence, and clear Ideas of the perfection of that Being, whose agencies or influences we discern to be uniformly and invariably wise and good. EVE-

EVERY diſpoſition in the creature to contradict and oppoſe the law of his Make, or of the relations which attend his Being; and every of thoſe uneaſy ſenſations which are the reſult of ſuch diſpoſitions, muſt have their original in ſome other *cauſe*; inaſmuch as a ſuppoſition that they could be originated in the will, deſign, or influences of the *Creator of all*, would be to prove him inconſiſtent with himſelf, and deſtroy the *attribute* of invariable perfection: for, the Creature's irregularities, pain and miſery, are direct oppoſites to order, rule, law, and happineſs, the pure inſtitutions of the Deity, and therefore cannot poſſibly claim the ſame original.

LAW or *rule of Action*, not only ſuppoſes authority, but ſubjection alſo. But no creature can be a moral agent, and as ſuch ſubjected to any rule of conduct, without a capacity. And this capacity of the creature muſt not only qualify him for an obſervance of that *Law* or *Rule* to which he is ſubjected, but to prove him a *moral Agent*, this his capacity muſt be attended alſo with a *freedom* or *liberty* either to conform to the Law under which he is ſubjected, or to refuſe ſuch conformity; otherwiſe, he can be no moral agent; inaſmuch as an incapacity of ſuch variation of conduct, would deſtroy his agency, and render him a patient; and of conſequence, the whole of his conduct would be mechanical and neceſſary.

I WOULD in the next place draw ſuch CONCLUSIONS as are proper to ſhew, that the reaſon of things, or the religion of nature, its light and documents, do no way forbid or prove the unfitneſs of a farther Revelation.

AND if the former propoſitions be juſt, it will plainly appear,

1. THAT there never was any divine law given to *man* as a rule of action, that was an arbitrary and unreaſonable inſtitution. But on the contrary, it muſt in its nature, deſign, and tendency be fit and proper; *i. e.* as fitneſs is found to ariſe from the proportion of things in the ſeveral relations they bear to each other: neither can it ever be ſuppos'd that the *all perfect mind* can ever deviate from ſuch an invariable law as this reaſon or fitneſs, which would be to differ from himſelf; for this proportion is the eſtabliſhment of infinite wiſdom, and unerring underſtanding, and is eternally inſeparable from it.

2. IF the fitneſſes of things *, as they ariſe from their ſeveral relations and proportions, be the eſtabliſhment of infinite wiſdom and goodneſs; then as whatever contradicts and diſturbs this fitneſs cannot claim the ſame origination,

* By the *fitneſſes of things* here I would be underſtood to mean ſomething relative, ſuch as may be known, by the reſpect *proper means* have to their *end*.

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ſo it will hence follow, that a Being poſſeſs'd of perfect wiſdom and goodneſs, cannot equally approve of ſuch contrarieties, nor treat the ſubjects of them with alike eſteem and approbation. How far ſuch kind of reſentment as is found in the creature may be ſuppos'd to have a place in the divine mind I pretend not to determine: whatever of this is inconſiſtent with invariable perfection of nature, I conclude cannot be admitted there: nevertheleſs I am perſuaded of the truth of this, *viz.* that as creatures muſt be very differently affected towards good and evil, right and wrong, in order to the perfection of their natures, or which is much the ſame, a greater reſemblance of their *Maker*, ſo it will remain as an unavoidable conſequence that the moſt perfect Being, their *Maker*, muſt be differently diſpos'd, and conduct differently towards theſe different objects; otherwiſe, the natures of things are alterable, and what is truth or goodneſs in him, is of a very different nature to what it is in the creature; or at leaſt, *truth* and *fitneſs*, and their contraries muſt appear in an indifferent light to him, although their great diſagreement, and wide oppoſition is made evident to the creature, even to that creature, the perfection of whoſe nature can only conſiſt in the reſemblance he bears to the perfections of this his *Maker*. But this cannot be the caſe, because the invariableneſs of that ſelf-enjoyment, or poſſeſſion which God has of himſelf, reſults from rectitude of nature; and the unori-

gination and unchangeableneſs of that rectitude, is that, and that alone, wherein it can differ from the happineſs of created regular agents: therefore whatever contradicts and oppoſes ſuch a regularity of nature, cannot poſſibly be agreeable to an unchangeably wiſe and good Being, but muſt according to the degree of its deviation be diſlik'd and diſapprov'd by him; at the ſame time, conſiſtently enough with the perfection and bleſſedneſs of his own being: and indeed all good *Writers* when they have attempted to deſcribe a truly pious or good man, have repreſented him as one that expreſs'd a veneration and eſteem for his *Maker*, by an abhorrence of every affront that is offered by another to his authority, as well as by a circumſpect regard to the law of his own make: ſo the *ſacred Writers* have expreſs'd it; *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.* — Now altho' *loving* and *hating* be affections in the creature, which by their irregularities produce pain and miſery, yet theſe under due regulations are never attended with ſuch conſequences, but on the contrary, become as it were, the very *capacities* of happineſs: and why an invariably regular approbation and diſapprobation, attended with a conduct ſuitable thereunto, muſt not ever be preſent with an infinitely unerring underſtanding, I ſee no reaſon at all to diſpute or deny.

3. FROM former axioms it will alſo appear, that if any created free agent ſhould deviate from

from the law of relation which attends his make and condition of being, ſuch deviation will introduce *new* and *different circumſtances* and relations; even ſuch as could have no exiſtence *prior* to ſuch deviation. For inſtance, Man, as a reaſonable creature and a free agent is the pure workmanſhip of the Creator, fitted by his ſeveral powers to conform to the law of his make, and in ſuch a ſtate of ſubjection, he appears anſwering the end of his being, and as a liege ſubject of his Lord is entitled to his protection and favour: But man violating this law, appears in a quite different light, confounding the end of his being, and as a rebel to his ſovereign forfeits all claim to his protection and favour! And inſtead of that univerſal proportion, order, and harmony, which was the priſtine conſtitution, ſtate, and condition of man, he introduces diſproportion, diſorder, and diſcord. Hence we find, that although the pure conſtitution of things invariably propoſes *ends*, (as well as provides *means* ſufficient to accompliſh thoſe *ends*) which are worthy the great author of all beings; yet created moral agents can, not only *refuſe* to conform to that eſtabliſh'd order, but can, alſo invert it; yea, they can purſue even thoſe propoſed *ends* by means and methods which are unſuitable, and reverſe: from which it as evidently appears, that although *good* is the great *end* propos'd by the Creator, yet *evil* may be introduc'd and generated by the creatures counteracting, or neglecting the obvious and plain rules of proportion.

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4. In this condition, and thus circumſtanced, mankind appears, as having, *in fact*, univerſally miſuſed this freedom and power of choice and agency, and by this means introduced *diſorder*, and *various evils* into thoſe ſeveral relations he bears to the ſyſtem of Beings and things around him; the ſpread of this defection ſo univerſally, has indeed received its chief *aid* from unjuſt methods of forming the temper and diſpoſition of the mind in its infant ſtages; to which may be added, the continued force of Example, and Cuſtom.

5. It will farther appear, that although the pure conſtitution of nature, or more properly of God, ever did, and ever will afford ſufficient light and direction to man in all thoſe duties which univerſally reſult from the relations he naturally ſtands in to his Maker, or the creation around him; yet this abuſe of his capacity having introduced new and unnatural circumſtances and relations, This *firſt Law* or *Rule* will be unequal to this ſickly, diſorder'd ſtate of mankind, it having nothing remedial in its whole conſtitution.

6. If we conſider the great Being as man's Rector and Lord, and as ſtill propoſing the *good* or *happineſs* of this his diſordered creature, by providing means, or directing to methods through which this *good* or *happineſs* may yet be obtained; This conſideration muſt lead us

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to esteem such treatment as the effect of *free favour* and *unbounded goodness!*—

7. SUCH an *interposal* will not appear in any view repugnant to the first constitution, the pure law of nature, or to the immutability of the divine perfections; but, on the contrary, very consonant to both: since the *first end* is yet pursued by the great Creator, *viz. the good of his creature.* And this will farther appear no way unworthy the Deity, if we consider, that as *vice*, and *misery* its natural consequent, are relations that neither were caused, generated, or brought into being * by any agency or influence of the *first Cause*, therefore their several laws, connections, or dependencies, cannot defeat or obstruct his kind and just institutions taking place; for we are assured that the *means* he appoints in these *new* circumstances are only adapted to obtain the *first end* in view, and differ only from the first institution as they are remedying, recovering, or bringing back from such a state of deviation or aptness to mistake or offend; and which therefore cannot, in any sense, imply a repugnancy to that most pure and perfect constitution.

8. ALTHO' it is true, that *man* may by the aid of unassisted nature, or the light of reason, discern the degrees of his deviation from the law

* They are properly *non-entities*, and as such, not the subjects or effects of wisdom or power: but are evidences of the absence of every perfection of nature in the creature.

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of his make, yet it is as true, that this original Conſtitution provides no *ſatisfactory expedient* for the removal of that painful conviction, nor propoſes any *certain method* of obtaining quiet from a guilty conſciouſneſs: But then it muſt be own'd that men, under ſuch painful convictions, and in ſuch a depraved condition, have been relieved; even ſo far, as to attain a *ſettled tranquility of mind* upon a rational and firm foundation! conſequently, other methods or means than unaſſiſted nature could provide have been in all ages vouchſafed, by which *ſuch ends* have been obtained; otherwiſe, *effects* have been produced without any proper or *genuine cauſe*; which is impoſſible.

9. THAT ſome ſort of revelation has been afforded to man from the firſt ages of the world (I mean ſome notices ſuper-added to the reaſon of things, or that light which ariſes from thence) I think is evident from the moſt early accounts we have of mankind: there ſeem'd to be more immediate impartments and directions vouchſafed to man, in the very firſt ages of the world; even *Adam* himſelf is repreſented as converſing with the *Logos*.——Beſides, by the pure light of nature *death* could not have been known to be the rate or wages of ſin; but when it was known by *revelation*, and when ſacrifices were introduced, the *light of nature* could not point out any analogy between the rate of ſin, as being the death of the ſinner, and the *death* of an innocent animal, as being the

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same rate of wages; nor prove how the one could commute for the other: Neither could this be done by *Revelation.* Revelation might indeed direct men in the best use of *Sacrifices, viz.* as proper means of exciting contrition in the Sinner, and so keep alive a sense of the desert of sin in the World, till THE SACRIFICE should be made; which should prove an universal atonement, by giving the greatest and clearest evidence that the sentence of death is reversed, and a *general indemnity* proclaim'd upon the most easy and honourable terms to the children of men.

CHAP. II.

I proceed to give a general description of the Usefulness of the Christian Revelation.

AND I am fully of opinion, that there never was one considerate thinking man, who ever took a view of *humane nature*, as concern'd with the great author of Being, and did not soon see a *want of mercy* on the side of the creature: but *mercy* in its true nature is something voluntary and free, and therefore cannot be understood, or discern'd as necessarily arising from the known laws of nature; and, of consequence, a *revelation* is wanting to supply this defect. How *Revelation*, more especially the *Christian Revelation*, does this, will more fully

appear by an enquiry into those means or methods it furnisheth man withal, in order to his relief. And something like this we may expect, since the GOSPEL of *Jesus Christ* imports a discovery of the will of God respecting the very case before us, *viz.* the recovery of mankind to virtue and satisfaction of mind; or, in other words, to *a perfection of nature.*

THAT the *Christian Revelation* is of *divine original*, appears to me not only from those great and worthy purposes it is so well calculated to answer or promote; but also from the apparent harmony of the several parts thereof, strictly and invariably referring to the same great end. Besides, there is this consideration, *viz.* That motives of a worldly and low nature, and which are capable of a perverse influence, are excluded the grand argument; and such only are represented as are worthy the great Being to propose, or man, considered as a reasonable and immortal *being*, to regard.

BUT to come more fully to the point, I shall chuse to be somewhat particular in enquiring what those *evils* are which man has introduced; and in what manner they are removed by the *Christian Revelation.*

AS to the *evils*; they are VICE and MISERY.

VICE, wrong action, folly or sin, is of such a nature, as that by repeated acts thereof a disposition to such misconduct is strengthened, and false ideas of *good* encrease. As a consequent of this,

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MISERY, want of ease, pain, horrour, dread, death, *evils* in every shape, distress the creature, and cast an heavy shade over all its enjoyments: in which connected view we have *man* described; and had not the means of a recovery been vouchsafed, under such circumstances he must for ever have continued: for as VICE is no other than a contrariety to the reason and relation of things, or a violation of their settled order, so the *subject of vice* can in no view propose to himself any solid satisfaction; for in *such* a variation and contrariety, a succession of uneasy sensations must arise, and at last *death*, as its natural, yea, necessary production: *Death*, I say, which, in the most narrow view of it, is a dissolving of our present frame; but in a more extensive sense, is a separating us from all good!

THAT *Revelation* is a most proper means of man's relief, and recovery from such circumstances, may appear, by considering the several important advantages it affords us. As *First*, It sets before our view several branches of that universal law which approves it self to the reason of every impartial mind, as rules, under proper concessions, of our conduct in every relation in which we stand to God, or the Creation; at the same time supposing us mutable and imperfect; *i. e.* the creatures we really are.

IT describes the several kinds as well as degrees of deviation of which we are guilty; and detects and exposes the various incentives or

motives, which occasion these deviations, or wrong directions.

It affords sufficient instruction to convince the mind of the necessity of retracting such mistakes, and of disallowing such conduct.

It proposes methods well suited to remove the painful consciousness, and introduce a serenity of mind. That this might appear in the most clear light, and with the greatest certainty, God authoriz'd his Son, the man Jesus Christ, a lover of men, to do many things which should have a tendency this way; by which he might shew himself ready to re-admit into his well ordered creation *the sons of men*, and not suffer the punishment of their sins to be remediless. For Instance,

Although this *Jesus*, by a steady and uniform obedience to the *law* and settlement of things, justify'd the fitness of its precepts, and condemned man's disobedience; yet he all along taught *Sinners*, that repentance and sincere obedience should be accepted with God.

Again, because *example* frequently gives the greater force to precept, he undertook a course of obedience and subjection to God in those very relations and circumstances that human infirmities had introduc'd, and under some of the greatest inconveniencies and hardships to which it could be subjected, that he might lessen the force of their influence upon us, and

and become a compleat pattern of our imitation.

He expreſs'd the nobleſt principle of forgiveneſs of our enemies, in his laſt agonies, even a god-like compaſſion for mankind; and at the ſame time ſuch a truſt in, and reſignation and ſubmiſſion to God at his death, as render him a moſt uſeful example for the imitation of all his followers.

Yea, *he dy'd* that he might riſe again; for this was the appointed *mean* of his procuring as well as proving the certainty of an happy reſurrection of our bodies after death; — nay, he *roſe again* with ſuch a body in form and glory as all his diſciples ſhall aſſume by the aid of his mighty power.

He *aſcended into heaven* in quality of his diſciples forerunner, and took his place at the right hand of majeſty, or at the ſeat of power; and this as the recompence of his whole conduct on earth; and has all power given to him as Governor and Lord of men! from which ſtate of dominion, he, according to his own promiſe, beſtows favours on mankind; affording them every needful ſupply, both for their ſuccour and comfort.

And, *Laſtly*, That men may be reliev'd under a conſtant and reaſonable expectation of an after-reckoning, which ſhall be attended with an impartial examination of their

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ſeveral behaviours in this life, as a ſtate of trial, *he* has aſſured them, that God has committed *all judgment* unto him; even to *him* who was in all points tempted as we are, that he might have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, and know how to make juſt allowances, and to diſtinguiſh the degrees of our integrity. Nor could that awful event be put under a more agreeable direction, ſince he has given ſuch ample cogent proofs of his unparallell'd benevolence and compaſſion! as well as diſcover'd the moſt conſummate wiſdom and ſtrict impartiality! on which accounts Mankind may juſtly expect the moſt kind and equal treatment. Thus it muſt be allow'd, that there are many *motives* which REVELATION furniſheth us withal, well calculated to promote the great deſign of reſtoring human nature to its utmoſt perfection, to which the *light of nature*, unaſſiſted by revelation, could never pretend. — The which *motives* and *means* are at the ſame time no way repugnant to the moſt perfect reaſon.

Upon the whole, How delightful a proſpect does this give us of a mind excited, by motives taken from revelation, to a ſteady attention to the fitneſſes or unfitneſſes of its own inclinations or biaſſes? aſſiſted herein all along by an obvious view of the certain connection which they bear with their moſt remote, yea, their eternal conſequences! ——

FINIS.